HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS?*

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KARL YONEDA OF ILWU LOCAL 10

INTERVIEWEES: KARL YONEDA, ELAINE BLACK YONEDA

INTERVIEWERS: HOWARD KIMELDORF

SUBJECTS: *RODO SHIMBUM*; *WATERFRONT WORKER*; INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE; COMMUNIST PARTY USA; 1934 WEST COAST WATERFRONT STRIKE; BAIL; POLICE VIOLENCE; WORLD WAR II; JAPANESE AMERICANS; JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION AND FORCED RELOCATION; MANZANAR; SEGREGATION; ANTI-ASIAN RACISM; ANTI-BLACK RACISM; ANTI-JAPANESE RACISM; JAPANESE AMERICAN SOLDIERS; IMPERIAL JAPAN; FASCISM

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[00:00:00] **HOWARD KIMELDORF:** January 26, 1984 with Karl and Elaine Yoneda. Why don't you spell your names just so I can pick up the volume? You spell one; you spell another—whatever.

[00:00:11] **ELAINE YONEDA:** Well, my name—E-L-A-I-N-E. First name. Black. And Y-O-N-E-D-A.

[00:00:20] **HOWARD:** And, Karl?

[00:00:21] **KARL YONEDA:** My name is Karl with a K, and middle name's Goso, G-O-S-O, Yoneda.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:00:35] **HOWARD:** Why don't you tell me how the two of you got involved—I guess first Elaine and then Karl—in the ILWU or on the waterfront? What year and the circumstances.

[00:00:44] **ELAINE:** Well, I was the district secretary of the International Labor Defense, or ILD as it was known for short, which was an organization that provided legal and bail and prison relief for those arrested in that period. And employed demonstrations or attempts to organize unions and strikes. As a result, I was an honorary member of the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] San Francisco Strike Committee, and met with the strike committee and with their subcommittee on defense issues around arrests that were taking place.

[00:01:32] **HOWARD:** Karl, when do you get into the picture, into the waterfront? What year?

[00:01:37] **KARL:** I would say 1933 when I moved to San Francisco from Los Angeles. There happened to be an editor of Rodo Shimbun, which means "Labor News," a Japanese-language organ of the Communist Party USA.

[00:02:14] **HOWARD:** That was 1933?

[00:02:14] **KARL:** 1933. From 1993 on, I was on the district bureau of the District 13 Communist Party of California.

[00:02:24] **HOWARD:** Oh! I didn't know that.

[00:02:25] **KARL:** Which is composed of five members. We had weekly meetings. When talk of a strike on the waterfront was imminent, John Schomaker was assigned to meet with the district bureau. That's how I knew exactly what transpired on the waterfront. I wish I took notes those days, every week, but I was busy editing Rodo Shimbun. I described just briefly about that period in my autobiography [Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker] .

[00:03:09] **HOWARD:** I've heard of this. Is this available now?

[00:03:12] **KARL:** No, it's supposed to come out the end of this month, but it looks like next month.

[00:03:16] **HOWARD:** Is it the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] Institute that putting it out?

[00:03:18] **KARL:** Yeah, the Japanese—

[00:03:20] **ELAINE:** No, the Asian—

[00:03:21] **KARL:** Asian American Studies Center.

[00:03:22] **ELAINE:** With a special grant from the regents for it to be in book form.

[00:03:26] **HOWARD:** Wow, great. Maybe I'll get a copy when I'm down there.

[00:03:29] **KARL:** Yeah, so, that's how I—sort of the backdoor into the 1934 picture. Naturally, during the '34 strike, I don't do [inaudible] _____, but since he asked me, my assignment was the publishing committee. John Schomaker was the chairman of the publishing committee. A good writer. We have to give him credit for it.

[00:04:02] **ELAINE:** He became an agent, you know.

[00:04:05] **KARL:** He approached me to publicize the fact that quite a few Japanese seamen were scabbing, and also they were recruiting scabs all over the city, in Japantown [neighborhood in San Francisco] , as well as Chinatown. So why don't you write up a leaflet in Chinese and Japanese and distribute among Chinatown and Japantown asking for support of the strike as well as not to scab. Then we had many Japanese members—most of these Japan-born—in the Agriculture Works Industrial Union, part of the Trade Union Unity League.

[00:05:03] **HOWARD:** Ok, before we get there, let me—I want to back up a little bit and ask if either of you remember any agitation that the Marine Workers Industrial Union [MWIU] conducted on the waterfront in 1932 or 1933?

[00:05:16] **ELAINE:** I came to San Francisco in April of '33.

[00:05:23] **HOWARD:** From where, can I ask?

[00:05:24] **ELAINE:** L.A. [Los Angeles, California] I had been the district secretary down in L.A. There were two distinct districts of the ILD in California because of the raids of terror in both areas. It was just impossible to work it from one office. The Red Squads that they had in L.A. as well as here. Actually the strike era was not really the time that I met—I met waterfront workers from the time I came here because there were attempts—the unemployed people, people who were arrested having meetings on the waterfront and somebody would be arrested so I was down at the waterfront not just during the strike but in '33 on. The Marine Workers Industrial Union was a little stronger in '33 on the East Coast, and then, when the strike broke out, they were more noticeable and more activity in that field, as far as I can recall. I don't recall going to any Marine Workers Industrial Union meetings before the strike, but I do recall addressing the longshoremen on certain issues, what was happening around the waterfront, the arrests and the attacks. Let's say, August first, when the youth had their anti-war day. There were attacks in '33—

[00:06:56] **HOWARD:** What were you saying in 1933 when you got onto a soapbox on the waterfront?

[00:07:00] **ELAINE:** It was anti-war; fascism was just beginning to rise, and we really didn't realize how horrible it was, but we knew it was something that we just wouldn't like to have here in the United States. So it was anti-war and anti-fascist. The right to organize. The right to protest and not be arrested. Of course, they kept arresting and breaking up meetings. Street meetings were being broken up by the Red Squad, and the charges were refusing to move, disturbing the peace, distributing leaflets.

[00:07:40] **HOWARD:** Did you ever talk about concrete grievances that longshoremen might have experienced at that point in time?

[00:07:46] **ELAINE:** No, I don't recall that. As far as what happened within the union structure, that really wasn't my role to say, "Why do you want $1/hour? Why don't you want more?" That was not my role. My role was, if there'd been any arrests, to issue leaflets around the cases asking people to pack the courtrooms. So these people who were arrested, whose rights were violated—the right to gather and protest and to meet and to speak were being violated. That was the role, to point out the violation of the Bill of Rights and other rights that we thought we had and which were being violated by the police who were instruments of the industrial association and the ship owners.

[00:08:42] **HOWARD:** What were your impressions of the longshoremen in terms of their political consciousness or lack of it, in '33?

[00:08:50] **ELAINE:** The first time I came to San Francisco from L.A. for a free Tom Mooney [socialist labor leader wrongfully convicted of the 1916 San Francisco Preparedness Day bombing] conference that was to be

held, I came by train and got off the train in Oakland [California] , took a ferry across. It was early in the morning, and I saw what I thought was a mob of men. It turned out to be the shape-up. I thought that a riot was imminent. There were shouts here and there. I didn't understand what it is. I found out afterwards that's what they called the shape-up, where they came and where the ship owners would pick certain ones, their favorites. "You!" And then somebody back shouting, "I got a family! Why don't you pick me?" Or something like that. I did not recognize what it was. I was a little apprehensive of what was I getting into? That nobody had warned me that, when I get to the ferry building, watch it or you'll be grabbed by a group of mad men! Of course they weren't, but there were shouts. I didn't know why he was with his finger indicating.

So that was my first impression. I can laugh now, but at that time I was a little apprehensive. But I found out what it was about, that it was a daily occurrence. Of course wondered how they could exist under that condition.

[00:10:14] **HOWARD:** When you talked to them, how large were the crowds of men that would gather around when you spoke, for instance? Do you have any idea?

[00:10:20] **ELAINE:** Well, it depended what time the meeting was. If it was lunch hour—of course, they were spread up and down the waterfront. There was a workers' bookshop, a progressive bookshop, that was run by the Communist Party on the waterfront, and there'd be a lot of guys coming by and picking up the paper and other material. Occasionally there'd be someone from the national office, like Mother Bloor [Ella Reeve Bloor] , would come out, and we'd have a street meeting there. There were quite a number that would listen. If they were working, none of them left their jobs to come out and listen to us. I don't think we attempted to have meetings while they were still working. It was either before they went to work—if there was some issue, like the Scottsboro Nine [African American teens wrongly imprisoned for rape] or Mooney and things like that, we'd have rallies on the waterfront at noon hour. There was considerable interest.

[00:11:20] **HOWARD:** Do you remember Sam Darcy and Nate Branch [sic] and those guys?

[00:11:25] **ELAINE:** Jim Branch. Yes, I do remember them.

[00:11:30] **HOWARD:** Were they very good speakers?

[00:11:32] **ELAINE:** Both of them were good speakers, yes. Both with different styles. Branch, of course, was an Englishman so he had an English accent. Not very thick but it was there. Darcy was quite a—not a rabble rouser, but he was—

[00:11:56] **KARL:** An orator.

[00:11:56] **ELAINE:** An orator, yes.

[00:12:00] **HOWARD:** He's still alive and kicking, you know? I correspond with him.

[00:12:03] **ELAINE:** Really? Yeah, I remember.

[00:12:06] **KARL:** Let me tell you the Sam Darcy. . .the Communist Party used to have a mass meeting at the California Hall in San Francisco, near City Hall. Used to pack—

[00:12:24] **ELAINE:** No, we were in the Scottish Hall. Of course, the California Hall then had the Nazi headquarters there. Or was that before?

[00:12:31] **KARL:** No, this was before the ‘34 strike. He was such an orator, Darcy, that when they appealed for membership in the Communist Party, you ought to see—literally hundreds of hands going up.

[00:12:37] **HOWARD:** Who was this speaking?

[00:12:40] **KARL and ELAINE:** Darcy.

[00:12:40] **KARL:** YCL [Young Communist League] members went around and distributed the applications. Really those were the days! The Communist Party was growing and strong.

[00:13:03] **HOWARD:** This was before ‘34?

[00:13:07] **KARL:** Yes.

[00:13:07] **ELAINE:** And during ‘34, too, the meetings and rallies.

[00:13:09] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about Albion Hall. Did either of you have direct experience with that?

[00:13:14] **ELAINE:** We went to meetings there.

[00:13:15] **HOWARD:** Both of you did?

[00:13:16] **ELAINE:** Yes.

[00:13:18] **KARL:** Maybe once or twice, I guess.

[00:13:21] **ELAINE:** I went more than once or twice.

[00:13:24] **HOWARD:** I’m going to turn the machine off because I want to ask you a question.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Can you tell me what they talked about in Albion Hall generally? The kinds of issues that were raised?

[00:13:31] **ELAINE:** Well, I believe around trade union and the major thing here was the waterfront, the major industry. The warehouses weren’t being organized at that time. There were some.

[00:13:45] **HOWARD:** So it was directed at questions of strategy in the union, or?

[00:13:46] **ELAINE:** Some of it. There were times, if I recall some of the meetings, where I gave my report on defense and where it was headed, and then leave. Asked to be excused. I did not stay for the whole meeting because perhaps I had to go and talk in a park around civil rights, or having a mass rally for the Scottsboro Boys, the Kentucky miners [Harlan County Coal Wars, 1931-1939] , Mooney, you know. I wouldn’t stay for the whole meeting. I couldn’t really pinpoint if any strategies—like saying, “Tomorrow, we’re going to walk off at this and this pier,”—I don’t know if anything like that took place.

[00:14:37] **HOWARD:** Did they discuss larger political issues as well, do you remember? Like, “Socialism is really what we have to fight for,” and trade unions—

[00:14:45] **ELAINE:** Well, that the ultimate goal has to be socialism so that we’re all in better working conditions. Under capitalism, it will not be possible to really to have all the things—

[00:14:59] **HOWARD:** So those things were talked about? It wasn't just a question of where we're going to walk out next.

[00:15:04] **ELAINE:** No, when it came close to an election time or something like that, they would talk about candidates that we should support, too, whether they were Communist candidates. There were a number running for Board of Supervisors, for instance. Whether or not they could get their local to endorse the party slate of candidates. In some instances, we were supported. Not in '34, but later on I ran for the Board of Supervisors and had the endorsement of the longshoremen. So on the Board of Supervisors I was non-partisan, but I was also known as Communist—endorsed by the Communist Party.

[00:15:50] **KARL:** I think you can safely say that it was a real rank-and-file movement among the ILA. These are the really progressive elements on the waterfront.

[00:16:04] **ELAINE:** Some of them were ex-IWWs [Industrial Workers of the World] .

[00:16:07] **HOWARD:** Were they?

[00:16:08] **ELAINE:** Yes, some of them were.

[00:16:09] **HOWARD:** Were there any open communists in this group? I mean, Schomaker was there, I know, right?

[00:16:14] **ELAINE:** Well, yes, I was known as a communist even though I was with the International Labor Defense. You did not have to be a Communist to be an official of the ILD because I'm the living proof. Even though [Captain William "Red"] Hynes from the Red Squad in L.A. testified at a trial in 1930 that I was a well-known Communist and getting money from Moscow, getting gold, I did not become a communist until October of 1931. This was in '30 that he testified under oath that I was a well-known communist.

[00:16:48] **HOWARD:** Hynes was a lunatic.

[00:16:49] **ELAINE:** But I'm just saying that I was an official of the ILD in L.A. and I was not a communist. So that it wasn't because I was a communist that I became an official in the ILD. You did not have to be.

[00:17:03] **KARL:** I can single out two Black longshoremen, known communists— [?Joe White?] and Len Greer. Both of them taller than six foot.

[00:17:20] **ELAINE:** About 6'6" and 6'4".

[00:17:21] **KARL:** The waterfront people really respected them because they were fighters.

[00:17:30] **HOWARD:** White, I've heard the name, yeah.

[00:17:31] **ELAINE:** Both of them were on the strike committee; both of them were.

[00:17:35] **HOWARD:** In '34?

[00:17:35] **KARL:** Yes, and [?Joe White?] happened to have a Packard—that's the Cadillac of 1943—and he used to me to the strikes outside the waterfront.

[00:17:36] **ELAINE:** Yeah, San Joaquin [river valley in California] , so that the Associated Farmer, reactionary, said in the paper that I was known to appear and start riots and disappear in my limousine driven by a Black.

[00:18:03] **HOWARD:** [laughing]

[00:18:03] **ELAINE:** They didn't say "Black," not in those days, but by a "chauffeur" and things like that.

[00:18:10] **HOWARD:** That must have looked great!

[00:18:11] **ELAINE:** So it was [?Joe White?] who drove me to different areas.

[00:18:18] **HOWARD:** Before '34, before the strike, you had Schomaker who was an open communist, right?

[00:18:23] **ELAINE:** Well, I don't know whether John was or wasn't—

[00:18:25] **HOWARD:** Or wasn't he? Maybe he wasn't.

[00:18:26] **KARL:** Let me explain to you John Schomaker. I don't think he was a longshoreman from the beginning. I think the Party assigned him to work as a casual. Big husky guy. Any gang boss would be happy to pick him. In those days, they used to pick them, and a tall guy. . .His regular income—he worked in hospitals as an orderly. That much I know.

[00:19:05] **ELAINE:** See, I didn't know.

[00:19:07] **HOWARD:** Do you know how long he'd been on the waterfront? Did he just come on in '33 as a casual?

[00:19:11] **KARL:** I think '33.

[00:19:12] **ELAINE:** '33 as a casual.

[00:19:15] **KARL:** Leave it to Sam Darcy—he knows who to send to the waterfront, Communist Party members to send to the waterfront.

[00:19:25] **HOWARD:** He told me-he's written the names. Larson, I think, was one of them.

[00:19:30] **KARL:** Larson is the one—

[00:19:35] **ELAINE:** He's the one who saved me on July fifth.

[00:19:38] **KARL:** He's a prizefighter. He's the one that the employers picked him as a pacemaker. [?Patrick O'Hannigan?] 's another fellow.

[00:19:49] **ELAINE:** Pat was anti-communist all along till his death.

[00:19:55] **KARL:** I'm telling him about later.

[00:19:59] **HOWARD:** One of the issues I want to explore in this research—well, let me put it this way: in that period, in 1933, you're still in the so-called "Third Period," building dual revolutionary unions.

[00:20:12] **ELAINE:** Building the TUUL.

[00:20:16] **HOWARD:** And the Marine Workers Industrial Union, which is an affiliate.

[00:20:21] **ELAINE:** It was an affiliate. The needle trades had a section; different [trades] had sections. The actual structure of unions, I was never in. I'm not the authority—Karl might be more the authority because he started organizing agricultural workers in '27.

[00:20:42] **HOWARD:** What I'm thinking about, though, is the MWIU and its relationship to the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] . Do you know why the decision was ever made to go away from building an MWIU for longshoremen and to work inside the ILA? Remember that decision?

[00:20:59] **KARL:** Yes. If you read [William Z.] Foster's book, he clearly points out that it's time to dissolve TUUL toward the end of 1935, if I'm not mistaken. Then go into AFL [American Federation of Labor] unions. At that time, one of the main slogans was, "Defend the Soviet Union." They want to bring that issue into the rank-and-file members of the AFL.

[00:21:35] **HOWARD:** See, there's something significant because the official change in party line takes place at the end of 1935 when [Earl] Browder comes back from Moscow [Russia] . Yet, on the San Francisco waterfront, you effectively change the line in July of 1933 when Albion Hall decided to work within the ILA. I think that was an absolutely critical decision from the way I read the history.

[00:22:00] **KARL:** A correct decision.

[00:22:01] **HOWARD:** Absolutely correct.

[00:22:02] **KARL:** It's wrong to establish a dual longshore union—

[00:22:06] **HOWARD:** Why was it? How did you guys know that?

[00:22:09] **KARL:** Because ILA was an established organization, very strong on the waterfront. They're very hard to establish, a dual union. Although after the 1936 strike, the 90-day strike, a handful of the men, the followers of [William] Lewis, the district president of the ILA here in district '39, he and another guy Kennedy—they set up the ILA headquarters nearby and tried to recruit. They recruited a couple of hundred. Finally, those who joined returned to the ILWU when they formed the ILWU. I should have kept that leaflet from those days.

[00:23:14] **HOWARD:** They'd be valuable, yeah.

[00:23:16] **ELAINE:** Well, you did keep them but they were among those that we lost during evacuation. The only things we have salvaged, as far as documents and things like, is that in a couple of cases, if we had duplicates of something, we tossed them in so there was material maybe from '33 in there and material from '37—and tossed it into the cases. Those were the only cases that we were able to retrieve after evacuation; the ones with the actual files and order and dates and everything else were among those lost.

[00:23:52] **HOWARD:** That's too bad. It really is.

[00:23:54] **ELAINE:** Because he had it in Japanese and had the Chinese. He had nothing to do with editing the Chinese communist press, The Vanguard, but he had the files on it.

[00:24:08] **HOWARD:** It would have been a valuable source today.

[00:24:10] **ELAINE:** It certainly would be so that we have a hit and miss bit of documents. To ask about when they turned to the ILWU and things like that, I had nothing to do with it all, although there were strikes and

arrests. In the later period, the union's began having their own defense committees, building up funds for defense. Most of the attorneys that they used were ILD attorneys, but then they hired them on a retainer as their own direct attorneys rather than going through the ILD. But the ILD kept on with the propaganda, "Free whoever's arrested," like [?Tom Ramsey?] [sic, perhaps meaning Mooney] and all the other cases.

[00:25:07] **HOWARD:** But, Karl, you were on District Bureau 13 in 1933?

[00:25:12] **KARL:** '33, '34, '35, I think.

[00:25:18] **HOWARD:** Do you remember any discussions about whether Albion Hall should work within the ILA or if it should stay independent and push for the MWIU? Let me tell you, there was an issue of the Waterfront Worker. It came out and said, "Which way for the longshoremen?" It showed one path that said, "ILA," one path said, "blue book union," one path said, "MWIU." I said, "This is really amazing. The Party is basically tossing it up to the workers and letting them make a decision." Why was the Party so flexible in that regard? Everywhere else they were pushing the dual union line, MWIU. They pushed it in San Pedro—

[00:25:57] **KARL:** I think Sam Darcy is very dictator-y. He decided it has to go. But the Party on the waterfront is so strong that he respected them as one of the heavy industries that the Party wants to organize. If you don't respect their opinion, how are you going to organize the industry workers? Maybe that the reason, I surmise. I don't remember all this detail that we discussed at the District Bureau. You know they kept the minutes, and at the following meeting, they used to read the minutes. I don't know what happened to those documents. John Schomaker used to give us a report in detail of the meeting, usually lasting three or four hours.

[00:26:54] **HOWARD:** But you don't remember actual discussions surrounding the decision?

[00:26:57] **KARL:** Uhhhh. . .

[00:26:58] **HOWARD:** Yeah, because my own reading of the history is that that was a difference that made Local 10 as left-wing was. Because they were inside the union before the strike and they had credibility. In Pedro and the Northwest, they came in at the outside and said, "Hey, remember us." And nobody did.

Ok, let's move on to the strike itself, then. What can you tell me about the degree of violence especially? You should know that, at least through the legal side of it.

[00:27:35] **ELAINE:** The ship owners, of course, had the use of the San Francisco police plus cars. [small discussion aside] There was constant harassment. When they would try to have a street meeting around this, and someone was going to come and speak from the Marine Workers Industrial Union or come and speak from the ILD and tell you what your rights are, they would break it up. And maybe one or two arrests take place. As the strike progressed, there were quite a number of arrests. Quite a number held for deportation. Here's "Communist Arrest by Crime Prevention Bureau"—see, they put up Crime Prevention instead of the Intelligence Bureau. Convicted were 41, and held were 17, and continued were two. Dismissed were 111, for deportation 29. Which was a total of 300 in July.

[00:28:44] **HOWARD:** That was the end of July 1934.

[00:28:44] **ELAINE:** That was the statistics for July.

[00:28:45] **HOWARD:** Oh, just for July, ok.

[00:28:47] **KARL:** That would be during the general strike.

[00:28:56] **ELAINE:** Well, before and during. It's all in July, during the strike.

[00:29:00] **HOWARD:** Wow.

[END PART ONE/BEGIN PART TWO]

[00:29:05] **ELAINE:** —and maintain their attorney. We at times differed with what he was going to do in certain cases, like, for instance, John Schomaker was one of those that was arrested and was charged with a major crime. We told him that they should demand a jury trial, and I just let it go because he'd be thrown to the wolves. Just left it up to the judge, regardless of what deals their attorney would be able make, it would not wash off on John. When he came into court, if he didn't have a jury trial, they would really throw the book at him. I think in the end, he did get a heavier sentence than the others that were involved in the case he was in. I can't pinpoint each case separately because at times it was just mass arrests.

When the reign of terror started, it started with them raiding the unemployment lot on Howard Street. The Ex-Servicemen's League, which was in existence then, had a lot where they conducted street meetings and things like that. That was the first place that was raided, over 100 arrests. Then that night, on July seventeenth, Jackson and McKee, and I'm trying to think who the third [was] , of the Marine Workers Industrial Union, and Joe Wilson and myself of the ILD—five of us meeting in Harry Jackson's—he was the head of the Marine Workers Industrial Union—meeting in his room on McAllister Street to see whether to take out a federal injunction because martial law had been declared. You couldn't get in and out of the Marine Workers Industrial Union headquarters. There were a lot of men that were behind the National Guard, and so on. We were discussing what type—should it be a federal injunction? Should we try some other means to get the hall open?—when his home was raided by the Red Squad and the five of us were arrested and charged with $1000 bag [bail] . That was something that the police here used to harass those were arrested. $1000 bag was normally used against pimps and madams when their places were raided and they were arrested—because ordinary bag bail was only $10. $1000 bag you had to put $1000 bail.

[00:31:36] **HOWARD:** That's a lot of money in those days, jeez.

[00:31:37] **ELAINE:** That was a lot of money. When you have 150 arrests, and all of them are charged with that, it becomes—and then some also have a disturbing the peace because they shouted back at the police that no, they're not going to get off their soapbox. They're going to continue; they have the right to speak. So they had another charge, and so it was quite a bit of money. It was a form of harassment. Usually when a group was arrested together, they also tried them together. In this case, they separated us. Three Marine Workers Industrial Union [members] and Joe Wilson's trial were together, the four men, and mine was separated from them. I was not on trial [with them] , although it was the same charges, and the same night, and the same place that we were arrested, in a private home. They separated. The reign of terror was still going on on the outside, but I was bailed out for the first time during that period.

I'd been arrested, by the way, about four different times during that strike. In May, I was in the Hall of Justice to bail out two seamen who had been arrested. The Marine Workers Industrial Union used the ILD directly for their bail and everything else. We did not use bail bond brokers. The ILA, on the other hand, did use bail bond brokers for some of their bail. But they did follow suit initially; when a case was coming up, they would pack the courtroom and what-have-you. They took up that tactic on certain cases.

[00:33:18] **HOWARD:** Do you have any idea what the political effect of the violence was? That is to say, how did a normal rank-and-file worker perceive it? Was it just sort of random violence, or was it, as the communists were saying, state repression? Do you have any idea? I'm sure it varied.

[00:33:33] **ELAINE:** It did vary. The thing was, that I know when I went on trial, the courtroom was always packed. Of course, it couldn't be of those who had a job, if the strike was over, because they had to go to work. But then the courtroom row was filled, maybe their wives and neighbors who were unemployed who filled the courtroom. Same was true when Harry Jackson was on trial—a lot of the seamen were still on the bricks, and so they packed the courtroom. The trial didn't take place till August, although we were arrested in July.

But the first time, as I say, there were two seamen who'd been arrested. I stopped off at the second floor to see if there were any other seamen or names I recognized who'd been maybe arrested during the night. This was after the strike had first started, and they began picking up here and there. Leaflet distribution, disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, and what have you. But individuals, not in mass. These two seamen had been arrested, and I was there. I had the $2000 bail on me to bail them out—no, it was $250 at that time. They weren't $1000 bag. One was refusing to move, and I think the other one was disturbing the peace. It was only $250. So I had that money on me. I was reading the roster, and [?Judge Steiger?] , who was a reactionary, fascist judge in municipal court—later was elevated to the Superior Court, and one of the Red Squad—approached me and said, "What are you doing here?" I said I'm looking at the roster to see if there's any trials here that I should appear in and ask for continuance because [George] Anderson was out of town, the chief counsel of the ILD. So I wanted to see, and then I'm going upstairs. "Oh, you're coming upstairs right now." And they took me upstairs and charged me with $1000 bag thinking I would use the money I had on me to bail myself out, which I didn't do. I had to call the [ILD] office and had them come, and then I bailed those two men out. Those two men were the only two forfeitures of bail we had during the several hundred cases that we had bailed out on smaller charges, higher charges. I maintain to this day it's because when they had to come to court, they were behind the National Guard. You couldn't come out. The judge forfeited their bail. I still maintain.

Because we didn't just indiscriminately because someone was arrested in the unemployed lot or arrested on a pier—the union involved, the organization involved was contacted to see if they knew these men. There could be agents who were among those who were arrested, and the money that the ILD had was raised from loans from $1 up to thousands of dollars from certain people, loans that were repayable on demand. Unless someone gave a specific case.

Let's say in my case—at one time, my bail was $4,000 on four charges. If someone gave bail specifically for Elaine Black, it was tied up for the duration, whether for the appeal or the trail. But if they gave for the general bail fund alone, and it had three trustees—two of them were attorneys, and I was the third trustee—if they made a demand—if it was over $100, they had to give us 30 days' notice if they wanted it returned because really the funds were just tied up. If it was less than $100, they could just say, "Now, look, I'm going to need it tomorrow. I have to meet my rent, and I didn't get a paycheck this week." And it would be returned. During that whole struggle, all that was forfeited was the $500—the $250 on those two seamen. The union had said they were union members. So, to this day, I was never able to track it down, because I myself was in jail for three weeks after that. I got out two days after they arrested me on the seventeenth. Then I spoke at a park and got re-arrested and then spent three more weeks in jail. So, I couldn't track down actually what had happened. There'd been a turn to general strike and everything else.

But those are part of the issues. The respect, I think, that most of the rank-and-filers had for the ILD and its nature, its work—even though it's called a red organization. Quite a number of them became individual members. The local itself became an affiliate, paying so much dues per month—I've forgotten what it was a that time as an affiliate. When there were different cases coming up, I was welcome at their union meeting to speak on it. When I ran for office in '39, the local was among those that endorsed me. The respect, and the fact that I was a known Red. I got convicted, by the way, on the $1000 bag. The headline was, "Black Woman Convicted in Red Trial," because my name was Black. I was known as Elaine Black. The Hearst press began

calling me the "Tiger Woman." The Western Worker called me "the Red Angel." The amusing part about all this is that a police officer is the one who first called me a red angel.

[00:39:40] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:39:42] **ELAINE:** There were a couple of men arrested during the strike, and they kept saying they wanted to make a call. The cop said, "Don't worry, your Red Angel will be here soon." Then when I appeared with the bail money, why there I come. So it's always amused me, that particular. . .And it was picked up by The Western Worker.

[00:40:06] **HOWARD:** You said several strikers became members of the ILD, or. . . ?

[00:40:10] **ELAINE:** Quite a number, yes, individual members of the ILD and helped in the "Free the Scottsboro Boys" and the "Free Mooney" campaign and "Free Angelo Herndon" [African American labor organizer imprisoned for being a communist] and different campaigns that were going on.

[00:40:23] **HOWARD:** Could you have any estimate of how many longshoremen might have become involved in that?

[00:40:27] **ELAINE:** No, I couldn't, nor can I for seamen also that became members. Then, when they came into port again, they'd come up to the headquarters and make donations from their pay from the prison relief fund. All those who were labor prisoners, like Mooney and the McNamara brothers [James and John McNamara, convicted of Los Angeles Times bombing] and the criminal syndicalism victims—which we had a number of them in the '30s doing time in San Quentin and in Folsom. We would send them monthly checks. Some of them would just make contributions for prison family relief. Whatever it was that they gave their contributions for, unless it was general, it was used for that specific purpose. To make sure that labor prisoners' children had—

[00:41:15] **KARL:** Excuse me, Elaine. These names, are they part of those deported?

[00:41:21] **ELAINE:** Well, there were 29 held for deportation. I don't know whether they all got deported—

[00:41:24] **KARL:** More than 29 names—

[00:41:27] **ELAINE:** This was just in July, and they were different days, Karl. Now, here we have a list—

[00:41:35] **KARL:** What's these head tax?

[00:41:37] **ELAINE:** Well, you have to pay a tax. . .Well, here, I don't know what the head tax—this was what they had paid to be here, to come ashore. Most of them were seamen, I think.

[00:41:49] **HOWARD:** Yeah, it says, "MWIU SUP," so it must be seamen.

[00:41:49] **ELAINE:** And here it says where was he arrested or picked up? At the ILA kitchen. This one was Howard Street, Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League. See? And this on Third Street.

[00:42:08] **HOWARD:** Is this the MWIU address?

[00:42:11] **ELAINE:** 65 Jackson [St] , yes.

[00:42:11] **KARL:** It's the Party headquarters.

[00:42:11] **ELAINE:** Well, it was at ILD at the time, Karl. That the ILD headquarters, 121 Eighth Street.

[00:42:22] **KARL:** Party headquarters on Grove Street—

[00:42:26] **ELAINE:** 37 Grove [St] .

[00:42:27] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a general question about all this violence. What I'm trying to do is figure out what effect the violence had on the men—that is to say, did it make them more radical? Let me just add something else: the Communist Party was having a lot of literature out at the time, as I understand it, talking about the class nature of the violence, that it was an example of state repression. The Waterfront Worker did the same thing; said every time the police beat you, it's really the ship owners' club and entire class attacking you. Did that have an impact on the men?

[00:42:58] **ELAINE:** I believe it did. I think it did because they saw it. It's not somebody coming and saying on Third Street this happened, or on Howard. There was proof; there was pictures in the papers, destroying headquarters and things like that. It wasn't the Reds coming and saying they broke every typewriter and broke the toilet seat in the headquarters. There were the pictures of in the newspaper!

[00:43:24] **HOWARD:** Did they see the violence of it in class terms, though? Those are difficult questions.

[00:43:26] **ELAINE:** I think it's a difficult question. I agree with you. On the other hand, they had seen what had happened directly on July fifth and the nature of that battle, which was an armed battle on the part of the police, not the workers. The workers would pick up a rock on Rincon Hill and maybe throw it down at a cop, but they had no weapons. They had no clubs. It was the other side that was there with their tear gas, with their guns and everything else.

[00:43:57] **KARL:** I think all those publications, including the leaflets and The Western Worker, we never advocated violence. Even at meetings— "Don't be provoked! Don't be provoked!" Right, Elaine?

[00:44:12] **ELAINE:** Oh, yeah.

[00:44:12] **KARL:** Just constantly repeated. "Try to avoid it." But the cops, the other side, they really knew the violence.

[00:44:14] **ELAINE:** They were vicious.

[00:44:14] **KARL:** So what are you going to do? You have to protect yourself. In many instances, you have to fight back.

[00:44:30] **ELAINE:** They had agents, no doubt, on the strike committees. For instance, on July seventeenth, I was at 37 Grove. That was in the morning. Some woman came in, and that's where the Western Worker was published and was the party headquarters, 37 Grove.

I had come in wanting to get hold of either Sam Darcy or Louise Todd, who was then the organizational secretary. I wanted to ask a question, something that had happened the night before, and I was very disturbed about what had happened. I wanted to find out whether the so-called instruction was correct because the man who gave it, as far as I was concerned and a couple of others—we were looking at him as being an agent provocateur. [From] some of the other things he had done. This, what he had done the night before, was further proof of him being an agent. I thought that what he'd reported back from the county committee as something that should be done was a falsehood, I thought. It turned out that it wasn't quite that much, it wasn't a falsehood.

But I'm not going to that because that involves another. They had nothing to do with the strike direct. Just some editorial work, so that had nothing to do with the strike.

And a woman walks in, and she says to [?Alex Norrow?] , who's now deceased, who was one of the party officials, "My husband is a marine engineer, and he's ill. He likes your paper very much. I wonder where I'll be able to get it after this place is closed down," which was very stupid of her. I was standing behind her, and I was rolling my eyes at Alex. I could see that he was also wondering what kind of a stupid question was that. Just then the phone rang, and Alex says, "It's for you, Elaine." I take it, and I said, "What? What had happened?" It was someone reporting that there over 100 had been arrested at Howard Street, that they'd come and they'd broken in. It sounds from some of the things that they might be headed for other headquarters. So I hang up, and this woman says to me, "Oh, you must be Elaine Black. I've heard so much about you." So I said, "Oh, you have?" And she asked that question again of me. I said, "Look, just like in Germany, they are able to get out reports. We're now getting reports of what is happening there, murders, the killing, the imprisonment of the Jews, things like that. It's getting out. As no doubt we will find methods to get The Western Worker out. So if you're used to getting it down on the waterfront bookshop, if that's closed, then you'll have to find out where there's another bookshop. I'm too busy right now. I have to go down and see what charges they're putting against these over 100 unemployed men and see what we can do, as far as the ILD." And left.

The next morning after I was arrested, there she is in jail, visiting me and bringing in oranges and a toothbrush and a comb, things like that, which was absolutely forbidden! Even my lawyer couldn't bring me in an orange. Because they would dissect to see if you had something stuck in there. Here she comes—I got more and more suspicious of this woman.

Then, when I was rearrested the following Sunday, I sent out word to Darcy and to Lawrence Ross. I said, "I don't like this woman. I smell a rat. Please, please don't give her any tasks that has anything to do with the ILD." Whether the message got through or not, of course, later on I became suspicious of other men who were in the ILD. So perhaps that was why it didn't get out. She just clung to me, every step—when I went in for my preliminary hearing, when I pled—and I was my own attorney—I pled not guilty to a jury trial, things like that, she was there, acting as though she was really close to me. When I did get out after the three weeks that I was in, there she was, typing away in the ILD office. Just acting like, oh, jeez, she's really going to help the movement. That went on for nine months. She joined the Party, even. I was still very apprehensive. She turned out to be an agent for the industrial association. When they finally did bring her to a disciplinary hearing, other things began happening. In her purse, she had a gun, and she had identification from the industrial association.

But she appealed her being kicked out of the Party, saying that I was jealous because she knew English better than I did, and she was the fastest typer—things like that. That I was just jealous of her, and that's why I was bringing these false charges. Yet these things were found on her! The gall of the woman. But it took nine months before we got rid of her. So that's no doubt that there were agents that were smarter than she was.

[00:50:07] **KARL:** I have to go through some other files because we have copies of her letter when she appealed to the central committee, two pages somewhere—and also her picture in court—

[00:50:23] **ELAINE:** That day in court, she's my assistant there in the court.

[00:50:25] **HOWARD:** With credentials from the industrial association, she's going to appeal?

[00:50:27] **ELAINE:** Yeah.

[00:50:28] **HOWARD:** Weird.

[00:50:28] **KARL:** Shouldn't be this hard, but I don't know—it's scattered.

This is "Black Woman" headline.

[00:50:35] **HOWARD:** Oh, yeah.

[00:50:36] **ELAINE:** See, in fact, I met with Madame Perkins [Francis Perkins] when she was here. On the immigration case because the Department of Labor then had the immigration service under them. Then it became part of the Justice Department. So I met with her.

[00:50:54] **HOWARD:** They call you the "Black woman." [laughing]

[00:50:58] **ELAINE:** Well, I was known as Elaine Black, so that was it.

I don't know whether we're answering your questions or not.

[00:51:08] **HOWARD:** "In the trial, she refused to salute the flag." That's great.

[00:51:08] **ELAINE:** That was during my trial. I said I'd salute it when it becomes the flag for everyone, not just a few, and when it really stood for what it said it stands for—one nation.

[00:51:18] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you another sort of a question to get at this. How would you evaluate the communist contribution to the '34 strike?

[00:51:27] **ELAINE:** Well, I think that it just cannot be evaluated in terms of what it meant to the economic welfare that the longshoremen were able to gain, seafarers were able to gain, and also the whole structure of unionism, being on the upgrade in that period, and other organizations being organized, and other strikes that took place. The longshore strike wasn't the only strike that was going on. There were strikes in the agriculture field; there were strikes in the cleaners and dyers. In '33, there was quite a vicious cigar makers' strike. I became an honorary member of the cigar makers [sic] and helped those who were arrested there. So there were other issues as well. Of course, in all these areas, different ones were going around saying, "We don't want to have anything to do with the ILD and that Black woman because she's a Red, and the organization is Red." It really didn't deter a good many of the unions that were in the process of rebuilding. When they first started, the cleaners and dyers [Cleaners, Dyers, and Laundry Workers Union] union may have been strong, but then it fell down during the Depression years and what-have-you. Then [came] the determination to rebuild.

[00:52:54] **HOWARD:** Do you have any idea how many people were recruited by the party into the waterfront section during the strike itself?

[00:53:01] **ELAINE:** No, I don't.

[00:53:03] **HOWARD:** I saw documents that they took when they made some raids, and they said something like 75, but that was only up till the middle of July. That was before a lot of the heavy violence.

[00:53:17] **ELAINE:** Because July seventeenth is when the heavy violence began. I remember that day! [laughing]

[00:53:22] **HOWARD:** I bet. 75, it's a significant number, but it's not as many as I might have expected.

[00:53:26] **ELAINE:** Well, I think that they had a larger rank-and-file movement because, when there was a rank-and-file caucus meeting, it was pretty heavy.

[00:53:36] **KARL:** Don't forget the organizers of the Marine Workers Industrial Union, practically all of them were members of the Communist Party. Because they traveled up and down. As to the contribution of the Communist Party, you just can't measure it. We were not out to make a name of ourselves; it's just simply. . .

[00:54:09] **ELAINE:** The needs of the people.

[00:54:10] **KARL:** That's the assignment. Nobody told us, "Fight for the benefit of the working people." We literally worked hard twenty-four hours a day. She used to come home midnight, one, two in the morning from meetings. Somebody has to feed her, so I used to work as a dishwasher—

[00:54:33] **ELAINE:** At the Saint Francis Yacht Club [San Francisco] .

[00:54:35] **KARL:** Lousy, 30¢ an hour or something!

[00:54:40] **ELAINE:** Split shift.

[00:54:41] **HOWARD:** God.

[00:54:43] **KARL:** I tried not to be involved, otherwise we'd both—

[00:54:47] **ELAINE:** We'd be in jail at the same time!

[00:54:47] **KARL:** Then it would be very difficult, especially in my case. I had to publish the paper twice a month. It had to come out regularly.

[00:55:03] **ELAINE:** And if there was anything doing in the agricultural fields involving Japanese, you had to go there and work as an organizer. Not just an editor. [laughs]

[00:55:13] **KARL:** If you were there in '34, I'm sure you were involved. It doesn't make any difference what's the beef you have. That's the kind of situation we faced then. Many people don't realize. I tell many young people, if you're born—even a teenager during the '34 strike. I don't know if you heard or not, from uptown, many high school kids. Today they'll be opening the dock, the dry fifth, so we all go down there. Even it is reported in the commercial press, if you go through it.

[00:55:53] **ELAINE:** They didn't come down there to scab—

[00:55:57] **KARL:** For support!

[00:55:57] **ELAINE:** And a lot of universities.

[00:55:59] **KARL:** That's how much interest they had in this longshore strike. They are working so hard, they are exploited, and they are fighting just as much as ours. At that time, this town being [sic] a union town.

[00:56:12] **ELAINE:** It was known as a union town.

[00:56:16] **KARL:** It was really spread all over the cities.

[00:56:19] **HOWARD:** Schomaker was like the leading cadre on the waterfront during the strike, right?

[00:56:22] **ELAINE:** At that time, right.

[00:56:23] **HOWARD:** The most open? How do you explain his popularity and such?

[00:56:28] **KARL:** Well, first of all, he's sort of a hero type. Here he was beaten and bandaged. He's bleeding. It would take guts! Any violence would break out—the police would go after him right away.

[00:56:45] **ELAINE:** He couldn't hide.

[00:56:46] **HOWARD:** He was that big then, huh?

[00:56:48] **KARL:** Oh yeah. Six foot, what? Seven?

[00:56:51] **ELAINE:** I don't know. No, not six foot seven. He wasn't that tall!

[00:56:55] **KARL:** Maybe 6'2" or 6'3".

[00:56:56] **HOWARD:** Is that unusual for a longshoreman? That doesn't seem to be that. . .

[00:57:01] **KARL:** No, we had many people—

[00:57:03] **ELAINE:** Many big guys.

[00:57:05] **KARL:** Husky guys.

[00:57:09] **ELAINE:** He was a good speaker, an eloquent speaker. At that time, looking up to someone who'd had a university education.

[00:57:20] **HOWARD:** Oh, he did have a university education?

[00:57:22] **KARL:** Partially.

[00:57:23] **ELAINE:** He had part. So having someone working with them, packing the hook, not falling behind, not asking his fellow worker to carry the load. Because there were some freeloaders who wouldn't do their share of the heavy work at that time.

[00:57:43] **KARL:** Most of the leaders that you see here, also, must have some higher education. Not just high school.

[00:57:54] **ELAINE:** Yeah, he was.

[00:57:54] **KARL:** Of course, the fact that he was the chairman of the publicity committee.

[00:58:00] **ELAINE:** That's during the strike. What made him was his knowledge—

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[00:58:07] **HOWARD:** The reason I ask about Schomaker is he was an open communist, and people didn't seem to be too standoffish over that fact alone. It didn't seem to bother them. Why was that?

[00:58:20] **ELAINE:** Well, I think by that time, my feeling is, that those of us who were communists and who were helping the strike, whatever we were doing, it wasn't for self-aggrandizement. The feeling was a mutual

respect of one another and that you're doing the right thing for us. As long as you are doing what is good for us, we will be partners. Should you go astray, there could be a parting of the way.

[00:58:57] **KARL:** Besides, during the '30s, there wasn't much red-baiting except from cap [capitalist] press. Not from normal citizens.

[00:59:09] **ELAINE:** There weren't all these splinter groups.

[00:59:10] **HOWARD:** That's true.

[00:59:11] **KARL:** For instance, I'm known as the communist in Japantown. They used to call me "Mr. Communist Boss."

[00:59:20] **ELAINE:** Somebody still does!

[00:59:20] **KARL:** And one of the restaurant owners says, "I don't agree with your belief, but I take a hat off. You're fighting for your belief." And they let you have a coffee everyday they stop by.

[00:59:33] **ELAINE:** Right here in Japantown.

[00:59:35] **KARL:** So, the general strike took place, he says, "Mr. Communist Boss, will you get the permit for me to open the restaurant right on Fourth Street?" So I told him, "Listen, if you feed the strikers, I'll get the permit for you." "Oh, no, no." He put up the closed sign.

[00:59:54] **ELAINE:** He closed. Because nothing was moving during the general strike. Food wasn't being brought in and out to the commercial places.

[01:00:01] **KARL:** Japantown, you know, mostly conservative, nationalistic. But they accept me. Maybe some of them say, "He's kind of different from other Japanese, but that guy's really working hard to benefit working people."

[01:00:18] **ELAINE:** They respected that he was really fighting for his beliefs. Didn't matter whether he got his own head split; he was right out there again.

[01:00:27] **HOWARD:** That counts a lot, I'm finding out. The sincerity that people have.

[01:00:31] **KARL:** We befriended a doctor. We had the Japanese Workers Association of Los Angeles on the second floor of Main and First Street. This doctor, his name escapes me, but he told me that, "Anytime you need medical treatment, come to me. I'll take care of you. I don't agree with your philosophy whatsoever. I'm who I am, and that's what I am. But I take my hat off to you." In Japanese, you say, [?"Atami mai hetto."?] "I bow my head to you."

[01:01:15] **HOWARD:** That's quite a tribute.

[01:01:16] **ELAINE:** And he did—he did save his life.

[01:01:19] **KARL:** In the 1934 unemployed demonstration, I was beaten—

[01:01:19] **ELAINE:** '31!

[01:01:19] **KARL:** '31. He's the one who changed the bandage. That's when she came to bail me out, you see.

[01:01:32] **ELAINE:** That's how we met!

[01:01:33] **HOWARD:** Is that right? You guys have been together a little while, then, haven't you!

[01:01:37] **ELAINE:** Well, we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary in May. And the anniversary's very bluntly saying when we started to shack [live] together because we couldn't get legally married in the state, and we didn't have the money to go. That's the date we celebrate now.

[01:01:51] **HOWARD:** Is that right? You couldn't legally get married because of the interracial thing, huh?

[01:01:53] **ELAINE:** Yes, miscegenation laws.

[01:01:55] **KARL:** I'd like to take maybe three or four minutes about the part Lane [sic] Greer played in my cases.

[01:02:03] **HOWARD:** Ok, sure.

[01:02:04] **ELAINE:** Who played? Oh, Len Greer. Yeah, but the thing is, it's in your autobiography!

[01:02:10] **KARL:** That's alright. It came out. I just got a letter from UCLA today that they don't know when, but they have to call and find out, pin him down.

[reading from his autobiography] "I heard the scuttlebutt about the hiding [beating] was going on at the front. We decided that I'd ask Len Greern [1883-1975] a husky Negro longshore comrade, how to get into the union. Len not only commanded such a respect among waterfront workers but was also on the five-member AFL ILA Local [?3879?] investigating committee." They're the ones that processed all the applications. "All the work applicants have to be cleared through this committee before becoming permit men and, when deemed, admitted into the local membership.

"I still clearly remember the night of February fifth 1936 when Len took me to the committee meeting. He introduced me by saying, 'Brother Yoneda here was a Japanese American who helped in the 1934 strike by issuing leaflets appealing to his community and the Japanese seamen not to scab. He was also the one who helped us obtain the fresh vegetables and fruits for our soup kitchen from the outlying areas. Since our union allocates no racial discrimination, and we have no Orientals in our ranks, I move we issue a work permit to Brother Yoneda.'

"My sudden appearance surprised the four white committee members, who asked me many questions without saying, 'Aye,' or 'Nay.' Then Len, surmising the situation, broke in with, 'Well, you fellows seem to be disinclined to accept this brother. This is what I'll do: as our union has a tradition of issuing a work permit or book to the son of a member, I adopt Karl right here and now as my son.' With this unexpected proposition, Chairman O'Connell interrupted Len and said, 'Ok, you can go to the union office tomorrow morning and pick up a permit and go to work.'

"On the way home, Len told me, 'Sometimes you have to use strong language to call their bluff, especially where racial prejudice is concerned.' We had a good laugh at our turn of events. I'm forever grateful to Len's smart tactic."

[01:04:55] **HOWARD:** That's good!

[01:04:57] **KARL:** You see, although in reality—

[01:05:00] **ELAINE:** Karl, may I interrupt? I don't think it should be used word for word from the autobiography.

[01:05:05] **HOWARD:** Ok, I'll make a note of that.

[01:05:08] **ELAINE:** But, still, Karl, please, I'm trying to protect your rights.

[01:05:13] **KARL:** By the way, any-even a published book—you can quote up to, I think, 200 words or something.

[01:05:21] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that the way it works?

[01:05:22] **ELAINE:** No, I don't think so. No, Karl, you're wrong.

[01:05:23] **KARL:** No, I read somewhere.

[01:05:24] **ELAINE:** No, look, please don't go making copyright rules because you're going to get your—

[01:05:30] **HOWARD:** No, I'm not going to use the text verbatim. I've got a note to that.

[01:05:33] **ELAINE:** No, but he was helped in by a Black longshoreman. At that time, we didn't say "Black," but he became the first Asian on the waterfront—

[01:05:46] **HOWARD:** So that was in '36 then?

[01:05:47] **ELAINE:** '36, yeah.

[01:05:48] **HOWARD:** So, you were there for the strike as a working longshoreman.

[01:05:50] **ELAINE:** Yes, yes.

[01:05:52] **HOWARD:** What was that all about?

[01:05:53] **ELAINE:** The strike in '36.

[01:05:55] **HOWARD:** It was a big one.

[01:05:56] **KARL:** Oh, the ship owners tried to evade certain parts of agreements they made in '34.

[01:06:06] **ELAINE:** The hiring hall?

[01:06:07] **HOWARD:** Actually, before I get to that, let me ask you another question. Did you encounter personally any racism on the waterfront in '36?

[01:06:13] **KARL:** Oh, plenty. You know, you and [?Didi White?] , just because Harry Bridges led the strike and proclaimed, "Our union is the most democratic," and "no discrimination," et cetera—no, you've got to have a constant struggle to overcome racism. Even the Communist Party, we have to struggle. Anyone who says, "we are the best"—I would say that ILWU is one of the best unions on the earth.

[01:06:46] **ELAINE:** As far as their racial—

[01:06:50] **KARL:** Sure, they called me "a yellow" so on and so forth. Eventually put the guy in his place.

[01:06:58] **ELAINE:** Actually, you served on many committees.

[01:07:00] **HOWARD:** Did the local leadership back you, and, if they did, how vigorously?

[01:07:04] **KARL:** Well, if you're talking involvement in my work situation, sure, the union would take up. Let's say because of my color, that they don't want to be assigned to certain job or gang, then I can bring it to the grievance committee.

[01:07:26] **ELAINE:** But the ship owners wouldn't register him. So he was an unregistered as far as the—

[01:07:31] **HOWARD:** The ship owners wouldn't? Why?

[01:07:33] **ELAINE:** Because of his politics and his race.

[01:07:36] **KARL:** They didn't say that.

[01:07:39] **ELAINE:** They didn't say that, but—

[01:07:40] **HOWARD:** What did they say?

[01:07:43] **KARL:** I didn't show up regularly because I was a CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] organizer. Sometimes I would take off a day or two. One time, I was in Alaska—

[01:07:52] **ELAINE:** And he was also organizing the Alaska cannery workers union [Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union] . He was their vice president and went to Alaska as a union delegate.

[01:08:03] **KARL:** You talk about the racial difference and the red-baiting, et cetera. We had the ex-prize fighter, [?Pat O'Hannigan?] , his fighting name. He's anti-communist. He's on the so-called dumping squad in the '34 strike as well as the '36 strike. He also acted as Harry's bodyguard whenever Harry was at some meeting. The last time he was Harry's bodyguard, Harry said, "I know you guys; I'll take him." They said, "Oh, no, no, Harry, you're a very precious person. We have to protect you." So, this guy, on one occasion we were having a lunch and they passed by—as a matter of fact, Elaine bailed him out during the '34 strike. He highly regarded us—

[01:09:06] **ELAINE:** We saved his life.

[01:09:08] **KARL:** So he took my hand onto his shoulder, and he says, "This guy, Karl, is a good trade unionist, a hard worker. And his wife bailed me out. But the only thing I don't like about Karl—he has a hammer and a sickle in his ass!" [laughing]

[01:09:30] **ELAINE:** A friendly dialog.

[01:09:31] **KARL:** So the waterfront pipe, or joke—the expression, you see. He didn't say, face to face, "you goddamn Communist." I never faced that kind of a situation. You know, snide remarks, some of the big guys, "Hey, shorty, come over here." I didn't like to be called that. [laughs] Just because I was so small.

[01:09:54] **ELAINE:** No, you were 5'8". Not small at all.

[01:09:58] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I've seen a lot of shorter guys on the waterfront.

[01:10:01] **ELAINE:** But, anyway, there were many tales as far as when it became the ILWU—there were still pockets of racism, which the international had to struggle against. With the fair practice laws coming in, they were faced in different ports. But here, in San Francisco—

[01:10:24] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I want to talk about that a little later.

[01:10:25] **ELAINE:** But, here, in San Francisco, you had in '34 some Negro—at that time is what we called it, or Black—longshoremen on the strike committee.

[01:10:35] **HOWARD:** Yeah, they worked around the Luckenbach gang, right?

[01:10:38] **ELAINE:** Yes, you'd see them—there they were on the strike committee.

[01:10:41] **HOWARD:** In '34, then, huh? How many, do you have any idea?

[01:10:44] **ELAINE:** The two we remember is Greer and White.

[01:10:49] **KARL:** We had the racially segregated gangs up till '36. After that they integrated. When you go to a gang, they don't want to be split up because they work together, eat together, drink together, and speak the same language.

[01:11:12] **HOWARD:** Under whose initiative were the gangs integrated?

[01:11:15] **KARL:** Oh, Harry Bridges.

[01:11:16] **ELAINE:** And the leadership. Henry Schmidt and the other leadership at the time.

[01:11:23] **KARL:** They respected Harry. Even when I returned to the waterfront in 1959, every time Harry appears and he speaks on certain subjects, particularly Black longshoremen, they always say, "I'm in, Harry. You saved us." This was in 1959-60. You don't hear that kind of stuff today. They thought of him as a god.

[01:11:50] **ELAINE:** Well, they still do. You look at the retired longshoremen that are Black. When he speaks, they just. . .

[01:11:57] **KARL:** Whatever Harry says just goes. 99 out of 100, he's correct, he's right.

[01:12:05] **ELAINE:** "You were right, Harry, you were right."

[01:12:08] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I've heard that, in fact. Exactly that. [all laugh] They called him a prophet, in fact—they talk about Harry Bridges as a prophet.

Let me ask you some questions about the '37 strike before we leave that, though.

[01:12:19] **ELAINE:** '37 or '36?

[01:12:19] **HOWARD:** '36-37, I guess it's on the cusp, there, right?

[01:12:23] **ELAINE:** Well, it started in February, didn't it?

[01:12:26] **HOWARD:** No, it started in November '36.

[01:12:29] **ELAINE:** That's right, you'd already been a longshoreman six months.

[01:12:32] **HOWARD:** How did the party come out of that? Strengthened? If so, how much? The reason I ask is [William] Schneiderman wrote an article, and he was talking about how the Party was really strong after the '36 strike. Do you remember the kinds of activities the Party did in '36?

[01:12:49] **KARL:** Perhaps a different way. The '34 strike they really fought hard for building up the union and the conditions.

[01:13:02] **ELAINE:** The hiring hall, particularly.

[01:13:04] **KARL:** After that, I think they went in the political arena more than before. Before, they didn't have enough time to spread their activities.

[01:13:17] **ELAINE:** Oh, but, Karl, in '34 they had a whole slate of candidates, including you. You were running for an assembly seat on the communist ticket. So they did have in '34—but this was right after the strike.

[01:13:29] **KARL:** Nothing to do with the waterfront, though.

[01:13:29] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right, that's the point—the waterfront, though.

[01:13:33] **ELAINE:** But, you see, it took place after the strike, and the electoral work was sort of put aside during the primaries because of the strike. So that, actually, it was after the strike was over when the Party took up the electoral work of getting votes out for the candidates. That election in '34 was a little decimated because it started so late, the impetus was so late, after that.

[01:14:04] **KARL:** Don't forget—the waterfront: not all of them were Democrats. Lots of them were Republicans, diehard Republicans.

[01:14:11] **ELAINE:** And a lot of them were non-citizen, too.

[01:14:14] **KARL:** So, it's very hard to move into the political field.

[01:14:22] **HOWARD:** But how about the Party's impact back in the '36 strike?

[01:14:26] **ELAINE:** Did they do as much as they did in '34? Were they issuing—well, The Western Worker was still—

[01:14:31] **HOWARD:** And, concretely, what did they do? That's what I want to know, in detail if it's possible.

[01:14:36] **KARL:** I'll have to go through my file.

[01:14:39] **HOWARD:** I guess this is too hard to recall.

[01:14:40] **KARL:** It's many years ago!

[01:14:42] **HOWARD:** I know. Fifty years ago.

[01:14:44] **ELAINE:** A little less than fifty years—the '34 is fifty years now.

[01:14:48] **HOWARD:** It's close.

[01:14:49] **KARL:** But the Party was in good shape, I have to say so.

[01:14:53] **ELAINE:** It had grown, and was growing.

[01:14:55] **KARL:** Regular meetings and. . .

[01:14:57] **HOWARD:** Oh, I know a question. Let me ask you—they had open waterfront section meetings of the Party occasionally. By that, I mean there were sort of mass meetings.

[01:15:05] **KARL:** Oh yeah.

[01:15:06] **HOWARD:** Do you know how many people would normally attend something like that in the late '30s?

[01:15:11] **KARL:** Let me see. We had the waterfront section that's composed of longshore, seamen—

[01:15:18] **ELAINE:** Marine firemen.

[01:15:19] **KARL:** Marine firemen, cooks. Each union had a group, you see, that's composed of the waterfront section. Depending on how many men in the port.

[01:15:30] **ELAINE:** In port, as far as the seafaring.

[01:15:35] **KARL:** I remember sometimes they rented the hall up in the Mission section [of San Francisco] , about two or three hundred, sometimes one hundred. Depending on the season.

[01:15:49] **HOWARD:** I read a report of 500 once, 1938.

[01:15:51] **ELAINE:** Could be.

[01:15:51] **HOWARD:** That seem possible?

[01:15:53] **KARL:** That's possible. Depends on the issue.

[01:15:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:16:00] **ELAINE:** Was that when the Modesto strike case was on, or was that King-Conner [Earl King, Ernest Ramsay, and Frank Connor,] case? It depended, too, on what the issue was.

[01:16:09] **KARL:** King-Conner involved the marine firemen, see.

[01:16:12] **ELAINE:** The Modesto case were seamen.

[01:16:14] **HOWARD:** And these were open meetings? And there were sympathizers and everything else?

[01:16:19] **KARL:** Yeah, [?Cole?] asked a couple of Party organizers to be a speaker. Was Darcy still there?

[01:16:29] **ELAINE:** No, Schneiderman—

[01:16:33] **HOWARD:** He was East Coast.

[01:16:34] **ELAINE:** Yeah, he went back, and Schneiderman was here. Another thing around the waterfront cases—there were a lot of mass meetings held throughout the city. There were speakers there from the Party, there were speakers there from the ILD. Then there were a couple of very large Mooney rallies, which involved all the unions. Of course the waterfront—

[01:17:01] **HOWARD:** You say "Mooney," today I think of the Moonies, Reverend Moon [Sun Myung Moon] .

[01:17:04] **ELAINE:** No, it's that Mooney up there. [likely indicating an image on a wall]

[01:17:09] **HOWARD:** Right, right! [laughing]

[01:17:10] **KARL:** Here's a small section—what we thought about waterfront workers:

[reading from his autobiography] "Then why did we Nisei,"—American-born Japanese— "Kibei,"—like my case, born here, raised in Japan, educated there— "and Issei"—Japanese nationals— "particularly in the Trade Union Unity League, take a special interest in the strike? We looked upon the longshoremen as a symbol of militancy and a source of inspiration." Very true. "We regarded them as brothers to whom we could look for help when needed. We felt strongly that their fight was ours. Extending solidarity would bring about, we believed a closer relationship and better understanding of the plight of Japanese workers who had been excluded from the mainstream of the labor movement in this country."

That's how we looked upon the longshoremen.

[01:18:10] **HOWARD:** Interesting perceptions.

[01:18:11] **ELAINE:** You're getting a point of view that you didn't expect to, did you?

[01:18:16] **HOWARD:** This is interesting, yeah. Let me ask you—the 1936 strike. Maybe this violates security? I just want to know how many communists there were and how many sympathizers there were in Local 10. Any way of estimating that?

[01:18:33] **KARL:** Well, I used to attend the meeting. I never knew exact membership, but most of the meetings I attended—

[01:18:49] **ELAINE:** It was rank-and-file; it wasn't just Party. It was rank-and-file.

[01:18:50] **KARL:** If it was a party meeting, you'd have to rent the big hall, too. Maybe 40 or 50. Not in private home.

[01:19:01] **HOWARD:** That's what—you know Steve Nelson? He says the same thing in 1938, about 30 or 50 people.

[01:19:07] **KARL:** I remember.

[01:19:08] **HOWARD:** And then those are like members, and then there's a broader group of sympathizers, I'm sure.

[01:19:13] **ELAINE:** Then there's the rank-and-file caucus—took in those who are close to, but not Party members.

[01:19:20] **HOWARD:** And how big would that caucus be, do you have any idea?

[01:19:24] **KARL:** We never said, "Hey, if you're not a member of the Party, get out." Anybody bring anybody, ok, we treat him as a sympathizer. Let's say if 50 came, not all of them could be Party members, but pretty close.

[01:19:43] **ELAINE:** Prospective members, probably.

[01:19:44] **KARL:** If 100 came, let's a majority, maybe 80 members, and the rest are sympathizers.

[01:19:52] **ELAINE:** Quite a number of the merchant marines were around.

[01:19:56] **KARL:** In the port.

[01:19:57] **HOWARD:** Ok, so this is actually the waterfront we're talking about, the 40 or 50. Because Nelson said there were like 40 or 50 in Local 10 itself in 1938.

[01:20:06] **ELAINE:** See, he's indicating there were bigger numbers. The whole thing, a number of ships in that had Party members in there, transport workers working on the merchant ships.

[01:20:23] **KARL:** Well, pretty close, 40 or 50 in Local 10. You start counting.

[01:20:28] **ELAINE:** Yeah, it was about that.

[01:20:29] **KARL:** Christ, I used to know every one of them.

[01:20:33] **HOWARD:** And how about the block of the left, or whatever? Would that amount to maybe 200 or so in Local 10? I mean, it's difficult to draw lines between close sympathizers and not close sympathizers, but. . .

[01:20:43] **ELAINE:** Well, that would be the rank-and-file caucus that Harry [Bridges] keeps talking about. He says, "It was the rank-and-file who did it. It was the rank-and-file who did it." To this day, he says, "It wasn't I. It was the rank-and-file." Well, that was the rank-and-file caucus which took in Party members as well as non-Party who believed that this is what they need: they have to fight to maintain their hiring hall, they have to fight against discrimination, and things like that.

[01:21:09] **HOWARD:** And these were activists, more or less? Active people, they held office?

[01:21:11] **ELAINE:** Active, yes, they held office. Believe you me, they weren't all communists who held office, even in the height of it.

[01:21:25] **KARL:** I remember one meeting. Henry Schmidt was the president of Local 10. Some foreign policy issue—maybe you have to ask Henry. Did you interview Henry Schmidt?

[01:21:46] **ELAINE:** He's a bit old—

[01:21:48] **HOWARD:** Awfully old.

[01:21:50] **KARL:** This guy, [?Pat O'Hannigan?] is the anti-communist everybody knew on the waterfront. He died several years ago. He walked up and knocked Schmidt down and broke a couple teeth, you know? You ought to see the members—all jumped up and went after [?Pat O'Hannigan?] and kicked the hell out of him. You must respect the president, you know? He was the popular presidents next to—

[01:22:19] **HOWARD:** He had a high level of integrity, I could tell that.

[01:22:22] **ELAINE:** Yes, very high.

[01:22:24] **HOWARD:** I really liked him a lot.

[01:22:28] **KARL:** He'll tell you what he used to say to us.

[01:22:29] **ELAINE:** Well, he's still around. The thing is to read his oral history, and even then I think there's a lot of things that might be rambling.

[01:22:36] **HOWARD:** Yeah. It's too bad. He's like 85 now or something.

[01:22:39] **ELAINE:** No, 82, I think.

[01:22:39] **HOWARD:** I think he said 85 or 84 to me last night. He's getting old in any event, no question.

[01:22:47] **ELAINE:** And ill health is also sort of. . .

[01:22:49] **HOWARD:** I know, it's too bad. Ah, let me see here. Let's move on to—

[01:22:55] **ELAINE:** Did you see the latest Dispatcher?

[01:22:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah, it's on the table. It's got his oral history excerpt.

[01:23:00] **ELAINE:** They have an excerpt from his oral history.

[01:23:03] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about something that I think will be very germane to both of you. When the war began, the relocation movements began. [Louis] Goldblatt testified against it—

[01:23:14] **ELAINE:** That marvelous speech—

[01:23:15] **HOWARD:** How'd you feel about that, Karl?

[01:23:23] **KARL:** What else am I going to say? You can't beat this guy, Lou. He's really a heavyweight champion. You can't find a person like that. Did you read his testimony before the Portland congressional committee?

[01:23:40] **HOWARD:** No, I never did.

[01:23:43] **KARL:** It was in February 23, 1942 at the federal building, Seventh and Market Street. You ought to read it, but consisted of about two and a half pages. Without notes, he just shouted one after another the—

[01:24:07] **ELAINE:** Violations of the civil rights—

[01:24:08] **KARL:** Let me tell you what the Hawaiian delegation said about him when they came to Lou's memorial service. When they came to the negotiation table, there's the Big Five [sugar companies that held political power in Hawaii] represented there, all lawyers. Lou, he just come in with a pack of cigarettes and a cigarette lighter, that's all. Everything he just dished out.

[01:24:40] **HOWARD:** Oh, you've got it, the testimony? Oh, great.

[01:24:44] **KARL:** You can't find a guy like him. We certainly admired him, the stand he took. I said, I wish we had thousands of him.

[01:24:57] **HOWARD:** Did the rank-and-file ever say one way or the other what they thought of that position? I think it was the only union in California to take that stand.

[01:25:04] **ELAINE:** No, it wasn't the union, it was the CIO.

[01:25:06] **HOWARD:** Oh, it was the CIO, ok.

[01:25:07] **ELAINE:** He was the representative of the California state CIO at the time.

[01:25:10] **HOWARD:** Oh, so it wasn't like an official union position, then, huh?

[01:25:13] **ELAINE:** Well, it was also a union position, but the unions within the CIO in the state.

[01:25:18] **HOWARD:** Oh, ok, I didn't know that. The CIO was Goldblatt, that's right.

[01:25:25] **KARL:** By the way, it was Harry Bridges' idea, but he facing deportation charges—

[01:25:30] **ELAINE:** He said, "Lou, you better handle this issue."

[01:25:34] **KARL:** He's not the person [Bridges] to take on the government. Lou, he's telling them off about what he thought, what the CIO thought.

[01:25:46] **ELAINE:** The woodworkers in Portland, Oregon—they also were part of the CIO—

[01:25:50] **HOWARD:** Oh, the IWA [International Woodworkers of America] ?

[01:25:54] **ELAINE:** They were CIO at the time. They also took the position [against Japanese incarceration] .

[01:25:59] **HOWARD:** That was also a so-called communist-led union as well. I think that's significant.

[01:26:02] **KARL:** It starts from here—all the way—I watched him—no notes. Of course, he organized it in his head, you know. Way up to here, all the way down, then he read the statement of the CIO.

[01:26:19] **HOWARD:** Oh, yeah, I would like to take a look at that. I'll have to get the citation later.

[01:26:30] **ELAINE:** You'd have to see the three volumes were in different places, like Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles and San Francisco.

[01:26:35] **HOWARD:** Ok, well, let me see.

[01:26:39] **ELAINE:** Well, I think that one of the things you should know that after the war started, Karl was a picket captain when they were picketing scrap going to Japan. He was one of the local picket captains assigned where they were loading scrap to Japan along with thousands of Chinese during that period. When—

[END PART THREE?/BEGIN PART FOUR]

—that there was collaboration between the powers that be in the United States with Japan. That one of the times when he was picketing, the Red Squad or the intelligence bureau—whatever you want to call them at the police

department—dragged him off the picket line and took him aboard this merchant ship from Japan. Took him to the captain's quarters. Without introduction or anything, this Japanese captain says to him, "What do you think is going to happen to your mother in Hiroshima if you keep up these activities?"

If that didn't show that the so-called intelligence bureau here, the police department, wasn't working in cahoots with the intelligence of Japan! And that was the question—what do you think is going to happen? Now, how did this merchant marine captain know that his mother was in Hiroshima? He wasn't even introduced. Then he started hollering, demanding what was he being held for. Then he stomped out the ship. Then came December seventh and December eighth. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] picks him up where he's working, and his fellow workers started screaming, "You're taking the wrong man! He's the one who's been telling us about the fascist and the murderous things going on in Japan! You're taking the wrong man!" And they just pulled him off the docks and imprisoned him along with some others.

[01:28:42] **HOWARD:** Is that right? They came to your job—

[01:28:43] **ELAINE:** For 48 hours, yes. Well, they came to the house first. Now, I would never have let an FBI agent into the house without a warrant—or asked for a warrant—but the war had started. They were looking. So I just let them come in. But this is it.

[01:28:59] **KARL:** Afterwards, they told me that the pictures they had—

[01:29:04] **ELAINE:** A lot of malarkey [foolishness] .

[01:29:06] **KARL:** That it looks like you. This fellow supposedly came into this country from Mexico, one of the fifth columnists [group of people who undermine a group from within for benefit of enemy] , you know.

[01:29:22] **ELAINE:** So that here the gang that he was working with tried to prevent—

[01:29:27] **HOWARD:** They did, huh? They stood up for you?

[01:29:27] **ELAINE:** The FBI—they did, yes—the FBI from taking him off the dock.

[01:29:34] **HOWARD:** That's a nice story.

[01:29:37] **ELAINE:** And they all knew who was Karl was and everything else. He was a member of a gang.

[01:29:46] **HOWARD:** Do you think that the union's official policies about racial discrimination filtered down to the rank-and-file—the whites I'm talking about? The policy of non-discrimination, did it have an impact on the white workers? Except for the communists and those guys, you expect that.

[01:30:04] **ELAINE:** I think on a great many of them because otherwise, when so many of the Black longshoremen came up from the Gulf [American states on the Gulf of Mexico] and other places during the war, there would have been a lot of strife, and there wasn't. Because of the. . .

[01:30:21] **HOWARD:** There was some—

[01:30:22] **ELAINE:** Some, but I'm just saying that there would have been mass explosions!

[01:30:27] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you this question, by the way—after the war, I've been told by a couple of Black longshoremen, actually, that the Communist Party, while it pushed racial equality, it didn't promote Blacks too far in the union in leadership roles. Let me explain what I mean by that. That they were willing to

back you for an important leadership role, provided you really played ball with them. But, if you distanced yourself at all from the Party, and you wanted to be a little bit independent, they'd sometimes put a candidate up against you or whatever it would take. Was that. . . ?

[01:31:04] **KARL:** There were several instances, but, as far as San Francisco's concerned, they merely fought hard if any Black member would like to run for office or some other position. Of course, they have a dispute—I guess you heard about the walking boss, the supervisor. The walking bosses in the Local 90?

[01:31:36] **ELAINE:** 91.

[01:31:36] **KARL:** They kinda hesitated to take Blacks in. Now they have quite a few Black walking bosses. Also ship clerks—now they are transferring ship clerks in Local 34 to Local 10, but mostly they are Blacks. In the beginning, some hesitance because some ship clerks were originally lily white locals but they can't fight against time. These things happened up in the north, but I don't want to say anything about it.

[01:32:19] **ELAINE:** There's one local that's maintained its lily white stance—

[01:32:23] **HOWARD:** Local 8.

[01:32:24] **ELAINE:** So threatened by—

[01:32:27] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I know that whole history.

[01:32:29] **KARL:** But, if anybody attack ILWU because of that, we would say they miss the point.

[01:32:40] **ELAINE:** Frankly, I don't think that the Party paid that much attention—they paid attention to who's running, but I think that, if some of the Blacks felt that they were slighted, it wasn't a question of playing ball with them. It was a question of what kind of ball they wanted to be played with. And how.

[01:33:00] **HOWARD:** Well, I guess, yeah.

[01:33:04] **ELAINE:** Because there was some of them—both white and Black—who the Party would not support because of actually their—

[01:33:16] **HOWARD:** There were also some Blacks, I understand, who played ball with the Party early on, and the Party promoted them into positions of leadership. Then after a while they started chasing money and things like that and got very corrupt.

[01:33:28] **ELAINE:** That's what I'm saying. It depends whether they continued their support—

[01:33:31] **HOWARD:** See, then, it looks to me like what this guy was saying. He said, as long as you played ball with the Party, they'd push you all the way to the top.

[01:33:37] **KARL:** There were one or two instances, I think.

[01:33:41] **HOWARD:** And it wasn't so much that these guys had great politics, but that they were willing to defer to the leadership. I guess that happened with white guys, too, so I don't know that that was significant.

[01:33:47] **KARL:** The fact remained that local constitution and bylaws as far as the International constitution provided for anyone who actually carried out discriminatory actions—you were brought before the trial

committee and if found guilty, and you will be kicked out. I guess you heard about the Stockton [California] warehouse local?

[01:33:48] **ELAINE:** [Local] 6, yeah.

[01:33:56] **KARL:** When the Japanese came back—

[01:34:19] **HOWARD:** I'm staying with Harvey. You know Harvey Schwartz, right?

[01:34:22] **ELAINE:** He can fill you in that.

[01:34:22] **HOWARD:** I've read it, yeah.

[01:34:22] **KARL:** This was during wartime, you see.

[01:34:24] **HOWARD:** I know.

[01:34:24] **KARL:** The ILWU pushed, "Take Japanese in," never mind a war is going on. But a couple men at the start would say, "I don't want to live with the Japanese."

[01:34:30] **ELAINE:** He's heard that from Harvey.

[01:34:40] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a few final questions here about—the next big issue, I guess, is screening in 1950. You were screened, I assume.

[01:34:49] **ELAINE:** No.

[01:34:50] **KARL:** If you have a question about screening, I refused in the pass to go the Army or Navy.

[01:34:58] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's screening.

[01:35:00] **KARL:** We don't care to go anyway.

[01:35:01] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

[01:35:01] **KARL:** We'll get by in other docks.

[01:35:05] **ELAINE:** When he got back from the service, he was quite ill, and he was gone from the waterfront for a number of years. He had major surgery, which the VA [Veterans Affairs] said was necessary. It was connected—that's another story—he had a kidney removed. Was quite ill for a number of years. When he regained his health, when the doctor released him that he could go back longshoring—see, when he came back—

[01:35:27] **HOWARD:** You went in the service? I didn't know that.

[01:35:29] **ELAINE:** He served in China, Burma, India.

[01:35:32] **KARL:** It was the intelligence service [Military Intelligence Service] .

[01:35:34] **HOWARD:** They relocated you where in the concentration camp?

[01:35:37] **ELAINE:** To Manzanar. He was the oldest to enlist, November of '42. That's before the 442nd [nd Infantry Regiment, largely made up of second-generation Japanese-Americans] . He enlisted from Manzanar.

[01:35:44] **KARL:** In the camp, Koji [Ariyoshi] from [?Ohai?] and I circulated a petition—

[01:35:45] **ELAINE:** In July.

[01:35:45] **KARL:** To able-bodied Nisei in the camp—

[01:35:45] **ELAINE:** And allow enlistment.

[01:35:45] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:35:50] **KARL:** Some think we're crazy, but that's the only way out at that time! Many people say, "How come you volunteered for the Army? The Army's the one that put you in the camp."

[01:36:08] **ELAINE:** Yeah, but you were fighting fascists at that time.

[01:36:11] **KARL:** I always tell these young people, "Put yourself in 1942. You would do the same thing. Suppose you're going to say, this is my constitutional right. You have no right to put me in a camp." What would happen to our future? The reason why we thought of it, and the only way to defend even limited democratic rights we have in this country—suppose that the fascists and militarists won the war. What would happen? We'd be thrown into the oven like [Adolf] Hitler [did] .

[01:36:53] **ELAINE:** We'd be at the mercy of the rapists of Nanking [massacres and mass rapes of Chinese civilians during Japanese invasion of China in] .

[01:36:57] **KARL:** "Oh I didn't think of that." Damn right. What do you think this 33,000 Nisei, including women—

[01:37:03] **HOWARD:** It must have been a little strange, though. I could see you're fighting with fascists, but then you're fighting for a country that's treating you in a fascist manner.

[01:37:09] **KARL:** It wasn't an easy decision.

[01:37:14] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I know.

[01:37:14] **ELAINE:** It wasn't an easy decision, and it wasn't an easy decision for the families to see their boys and men go marching off.

[01:37:21] **KARL:** And their parents were kept behind barbed wire.

[01:37:23] **ELAINE:** Not only that, but the thing was that, when he got out of the service, the ship owners would not allow him to work on the waterfront. Local 10 took it to arbitration. They had a big arbitration on the case.

[01:37:36] **HOWARD:** What was their objection, the employers?

[01:37:38] **KARL:** I told you before that the—

[01:37:40] **ELAINE:** Broken record came up.

[01:37:40] **HOWARD:** Oh, that's where it came up.

[01:37:44] **KARL:** Because you know the Roosevelt administration's policy that veterans have preference for any jobs. On this base, we fought like hell. Finally they said, "Yeah, you have a right to go back to the waterfront." Since this had started in 1936.

[01:38:01] **ELAINE:** And the previous years would count. But then he collapsed after working just a couple of days. So he left the waterfront for a while, and it was 1950 before his kidney was removed. Then it took several years for him to [recover] . . . So we were up in Sonoma County [California] , and then he came back to the waterfront. That's, again, where they wouldn't register him. He was working being sent out by the Local 6 hiring hall.

[01:38:32] **HOWARD:** What about the factionalism that developed around 1948-49? You had a blue slate of candidates running, and you had the so-called "progressive" slade—

[01:38:40] **ELAINE:** We weren't on the—

[01:38:41] **HOWARD:** Oh, you weren't around then.

[01:38:42] **ELAINE:** We weren't. We were living in Sonoma County.

[01:38:44] **HOWARD:** So you weren't back until 1950?

[01:38:45] **ELAINE:** Well, I came back to the working with the benefit funds in '57, and he also was working casual, you see. He didn't get registered until '59. He was just a casual worker.

[01:38:55] **HOWARD:** So that was a long block; I thought it was just a couple of years.

[01:38:57] **KARL:** [showing Howard a photograph] This is in north Burma. I was broadcasting to the Japanese soldiers.

[01:39:02] **ELAINE:** In no-man's land—do you know what no-man's land is?

[01:39:04] **HOWARD:** No.

[01:39:05] **ELAINE:** Well, it's in the middle. You're here, and you're in the middle, and they start shooting you. Whose gun gets you?

[01:39:12] **KARL:** He was my—

[01:39:14] **ELAINE:** Caucasian buddy?

[01:39:15] **KARL:** No, bodyguard, and here's the lieutenant—

[01:39:19] **HOWARD:** You're not saying that's you, is it?

[01:39:22] **ELAINE:** That's him.

[01:39:22] **HOWARD:** Oh, it looks like a Black guy.

[01:39:24] **ELAINE:** No, no.

[01:39:24] **KARL:** No.

[01:39:24] **HOWARD:** It's just a faded picture. That's you.

[01:39:28] **KARL:** This paper had five million circulation, telling the story about the Japanese Americans. This is one of them. When I come to think about it today—at that time I thought, for my family, for my children, for my future Japanese community, I've got to give my life. If they shoot me, ok, go ahead. [laughs]

[01:40:04] **ELAINE:** But, the thing was, that he did serve, and, as far as when he came back, there were an awful lot of guys who knew him and an awful lot of guys who didn't know him. As I say, he was back just a little while before he collapsed, and therefore that period he was gone quite a number of years. He was quite ill.

[01:40:28] **KARL:** I'm sure if you were the draft age in the 1940s, you would volunteer.

[01:40:33] **HOWARD:** I can see the reasons for doing it. It makes sense, but it would be a tough decision—

[01:40:38] **ELAINE:** Here, you've been picketing scrap and things like that. You've been calling them butchers and rapists of Nanking, issuing leaflets and newspaper things. This letter that he and Koji signed, the petitions that they sent to Roosevelt, made the Chronicle editorial. The San Francisco News had an editorial about it, the Chronicle, and Drew Pierce's column saying, "How brave these two men were," saying that if there's any kickback about this particular position, they are the two who were responsible, who drew up the petition, who circulated it in camp and so on and so forth.

[01:41:22] **KARL:** Altogether 218 signed, and 48 of them were women, including you! [meaning Elaine] [All three laugh.]

[01:41:33] **ELAINE:** Well, my name was Japanese! [referring to her surname]

[01:41:36] **KARL:** "We will take up arms against the Japanese!"

[01:41:39] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:41:41] **ELAINE:** We also were asking for the second front at that time. It wasn't just fighting Japanese; we were asking for the second front.

[01:41:47] **KARL:** That was the Party line.

[01:41:48] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

[01:41:50] **ELAINE:** You don't have to carry it out, but we did.

[01:41:53] **KARL:** Although the Party suspended us from the membership.

[01:41:58] **ELAINE:** Did you know that?

[01:41:58] **HOWARD:** No, why?

[01:41:58] **KARL:** Early—

[01:41:59] **ELAINE:** December eighth. Earl Browder's order.

[01:42:01] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:42:02] **ELAINE:** December eighth—and the spouses, too. You don't know that part of the history?

[01:42:06] **HOWARD:** No, that's amazing.

[01:42:07] **ELAINE:** You'll have to read it in the autobiography. We'll not go into it now.

[01:42:15] **KARL:** Browder's reason was that if any fifth columnist is hiding in this country, the Communist Party's the best place. That's his reason. It's childish. We're in the Party, fighting like hell for the Party—

[01:42:32] **ELAINE:** And some of them had been in for 20 years.

[01:42:33] **HOWARD:** I don't understand why. What's he saying? You guys were loyal Communists—

[01:42:37] **ELAINE:** Some of them had been in 20-25 years already!

[01:42:39] **HOWARD:** So, they expelled people who were Japanese in the Party?

[01:42:44] **KARL:** They suspended for the duration of the war.

[01:42:45] **ELAINE:** Suspended—and their spouses if there were any.

[01:42:47] **HOWARD:** So you got suspended?

[01:42:49] **KARL:** And the Party failed to speak out against evacuation.

[01:42:54] **HOWARD:** I know that, yeah. That's the record. I didn't realize that they'd actually suspended people.

[01:43:00] **ELAINE:** But those who were Communists, and sympathizers—there were hundreds of them in the ILD—remained true to that. Fight against fascism; fight for civil rights, and things like that. The only thing that we didn't speak out against—evacuation. First of all, the rationale was we knew the history of the United States. We knew that it was a racist-controlled [country] —we knew what they did to the Indians, that they used soldiers to drive them across the Mississippi [Trail of Tears, 1830-1850] . What would stop them from using needed men—needed on the front to fight fascism—to herd the Japanese out if they resisted? There'd be so many more involved, taken away from that fight.

[01:43:52] **HOWARD:** I ain't buying it. [laughs]

[01:43:54] **ELAINE:** Look, you know that when the FBI came looking for Karl, December eighth, that Monday morning—I didn't know this. I found out afterwards. They had submachine guns placed on the roofs all, from across the street onto our front entrance. On the roofs on Geary Street—because we lived on a street that doesn't exist anymore, Endicott Park here. Off of Steiner, it was an alley. One block between Geary and O'Farrell. Endicott Park. They had submachine guns all around on the roofs, aimed at our back porch and aimed at our front.

[01:44:31] **HOWARD:** The problem is, as I see it anyway, the Party compromised on a lot questions during the war. In their interest in pushing the war, they submerged questions of racial equality—

[01:44:40] **ELAINE:** Well, that was it!

[01:44:40] **HOWARD:** They antagonized lots of Black people. They wouldn't support a lifelong member.

[01:44:48] **ELAINE:** There were some members that were in there longer than he was.

[01:44:51] **HOWARD:** I'm sure.

[01:44:52] **KARL:** They didn't speak against the Jim Crow unit in the Army.

[01:44:56] **HOWARD:** Went a little overboard sometimes in pushing production.

[01:45:00] **KARL:** However, the segregated Japanese unit, like 442nd, at that time the situation demanded it, as far as the Japanese-Americans are concerned. If we are integrated, you wouldn't see us—

[01:45:16] **ELAINE:** You'd all be on the latrine detail.

[01:45:21] **KARL:** You wouldn't see the heroic actions of the 442nd. They were dying to show that they were just as good Americans as [white soldiers] . . .

[01:45:32] **ELAINE:** Well, they had a separate Filipino battalion.

[01:45:36] **KARL:** The Alaska Cannery Workers—

[01:45:37] **ELAINE:** Up in Seattle.

[01:45:38] **KARL:** Three thousand of them.

[01:45:39] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:45:41] **ELAINE:** Enlisted.

[01:45:42] **KARL:** The Filipino battalion to avenge the Bataan. At that time, nothing wrong with that kind of segregated unit. But the segregated Black battalion, it's really a shame. It was stationed in India, the famous long and winding road to China? Built by the Black engineer corps battalion.

[01:46:12] **ELAINE:** It was the most dangerous [location] .

[01:46:14] **KARL:** Totally dangerous, you know, the mud is about two or three feet deep. I watched them working in a muddy place, in the rainy season, especially around the monsoon season—about 400 inches of rain. And they worked hard.

[01:46:32] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I'm sure.

[01:46:33] **KARL:** Of course, you know, privately they are cussing but they don't object to what the war is doing.

[01:46:41] **ELAINE:** [newspapers shuffling] I guess you've probably seen most of these newspapers.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[01:46:49] **HOWARD:** "National defense migration hearings before the select committee investigating national defense migration, House of Representatives, 77th Congress, second session. Pursuant to House Resolution 113, part 29, San Francisco, February 21 and 23, 1942."

I want to make sure I get the committee here—it's chaired by John Tolan of California. Where's our friend? Is it here?

[01:47:22] **KARL:** Lou?

[01:47:26] **HOWARD:** Goldblatt's testimony begins around here. Page 11,178. That's a big hearing, 11,000 pages. Ok.

[01:47:38] **KARL:** Some of the exhibits—they incorporate it.

[01:47:44] **HOWARD:** Sure, ok.

[END PART FOUR]